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Interview with Henry Coeblentz

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Transcript of Interview with Henry Coeblentz

Molly Birkhead and Claire Beckett interviewed Henry Coeblentz at his home at 5:00p.m. on October 27, 1998. Two grandson's, Henry and ??? also speak in the interview.

CB: Could you tell us your address for the record?

HC: My address? Let's see, its Henry M. Coeblentz. It's 7....(went to find his address in the other room) 7869 B. Tomshen (?) Rd. 95, Fredricktown, Ohio 43019.

CB: Well I guess just to begin, how many people are there in this Amish community?

HC: There's seven churches and an average of about twenty-five families per church. Then there'd be a...we just call them children, everything in this district here there are 100 or 102, but the others are a little bit bigger then this one. So I'd say in this community you'd have close to 800 people.

CB: And, what are the boundaries of the community, or where is this community? Or how do you identify it?

HC: You mean the boundary lines of each church or what do you mean?

CB: Well, maybe you could tell us your church and then this broader group of eight communities, where that is.

HC: Well, it's just around us. We're in the heart of the settlement. All the other churches are right around us. Our furthest place is eight miles each way, about any way you could go...well the west wouldn't be quite so far. So it's at least about sixteen miles long and ten miles wide, is what this community.... it goes from Johnsville south, umm, I don't know how far to say.....Ridge Rd. It goes Ridge Rd.

MB: The Whittington's had mentioned that.

HC: Then it goes from the other side of 314 to the other side of 546.

MB: So what order of Amish are you?

HC: Old order.

MB: Your old order. Could you describe the other orders? Do you know much information about them?

HC: Oh yeah, there's a lotta different order Amishes like Schwartzentruber, um, that's not in this area right here, just us old order Amish here, but like in Waynes and Holmes, and Tuscar, and Coshocton, well there's about 200 churches you know and that's ah, and we got old order Amish and new order Amish and you got the King Amish, and the Beechy Amish is what they call them.

You know they're down in the Mt. Vernon area, Martinsburg, Yeah.

CB: So could you tell us what are the characteristics of old order Amish. Or tell us what defines old order Amish?

HC: Well we're just regular old order Amish people is what we call us here.... actually this district is from all over Ohio in this area here, from Joggle (?) County, Holmes Ct., Waynes Ct., Ashland Ct.. Yeah there's a few from Penn. though, quite a few from Penn.

MB: What makes the old order different from....

HC: New Order?

MB: Yeah.

HC: New Order are further advanced.

MB: What does that mean?

HC: Um, modern. Modernism is what we call it.

MB: Anything specifically?

HC: Ehhhh, not really more than just it's more modern, more modernism, way they live, their culture, stuff like that. (Pause). It's just in splits, you take over down in Wayne County, you've got ten churches driving past each other on Sunday mornings. That's how many splits they have down there. They just can't get along with each other. That's the reason this community started here, because we's didn't want to be in a bunch-what are our young folks going to look after, you know. They just mix all up and it's going to be hard for everybody.

MB: What do you think caused that split?

HC: Just plain people who wanted more modern things and other people wanted to keep the standards that way they were. It just went from there...and kept on going, you know? Then we got people that are just extreme the other way. We believe on the balance of standards. We've got people that wouldn't believe in having motors of any kind, not even washing machine motors, and uh, they think they have to have longer hair and bigger hats, and stuff that's, I think that they just feel that they're better, you know. And then when they drift the other way it's the same way is what I feel. I've got brother and sisters, I'm the only one in our family, there's 12 of us, but I'm the only one. None of my brother's and sister's worship with us. I got two in Pennsylvania, you know they could but they just don't want to, you know I mean it's because of the splits they had. Then I got a sister in Hadiville (?), Central America? (Asking us if we know the place)

MB and CB: Oh, wow.

HC: She's been there for thirty some years now.

MB: What's she doing there?

HC: She's a missionary.

MB: So are they still Amish?

HC: New Order, she's new order. She taught school over there for I don't know how many years, but she's still over there as a missionary to talk to women and so on, you know. And uh, she's with the Beechy Amish over there, but she belongs to the New Order Amish in Florida.

MB: What about the brother in Pennsylvania?

HC: I got a brother in Pennsylvania, New Order, a sister over in Delcenter (?), Ohio, New Order, I got a brother up in Harkelater (?), that's where I was born and raised, north of Canton, I've got a brother over there who's new order, but a sister over there who's Catholic! It's just that she was older and when my mom died 21 years ago, we didn't know that she was going with this boy from the Catholic church until she died. Now she wanted to join the Catholic church. The dad came out here, the priest came out and I tell you they just had the dad going back and forth, he says "What's the difference...(?), he says "Well, if my boy goes to your church, we going to have to ex-communicate him", and I said "well same with our daughter" (laughs). And um, then we're talking about different beliefs. His dad was a minister and our dad was a minister and my dad had six brothers who were all ministers; well, some of them were bishops, and then they asked him in other words you say if someone would come and break into your house and want to kill you, you wouldn't want to kill him. No, let them kill me....they can't get my soul. This flesh is going to the earth anyhow, what could it be going to do. And that priest just couldn't understand how that could be true.....

CB: So now are Amish generally pacifists, is that what....

HC: What do you mean by pacifist?

CB: Like, believe in no violence.

HC: We don't believe in wars you know.

CB: So could you give us um.....

MB: Well I guess for on tape because I won't remember, when you were describing who lived in the houses....could you describe that again?

HC: Yeah, I got a daughter who live in the other house; that's the old house, four years old (indicating behind him in the direction of the adjoining house). They bought this farm about ten years ago and the house burned down about four years ago then you rebuilt it again. Then two years ago when our grand-uh-my son and law took off, then is when we build this here, and

brought the family down in this area. And I was in Ashland area at that time, but we wanted to come down to this area anyhow for our other daughters. Two daughters here, three in Ashland County, one over Jonesville area. And then I got three sons. There in the Ashland area.

CB: So what made you want to come to this area?

HC: It's just different, you know. This area instead of Ashland area you mean? (We nod) Well I just thought I would like it better down here. The standards are just a little bit different, not a lot different, but just a little.

CB: What are the differences?

HC: Like um, singing. I'm a singer myself, in church, and I believe in having notes on how to sing a song. They took that away from me over there in the Ashland area. And over half the people believe in the same way I did, but I said I have to go, this is all on...this is not notes the way your people would have. It just shows you how-it goes up and down. It wouldn't have quarter notes and half notes. I know all that because I went to school in the public schools we had music tests. A lot of our people don't even know what that is. You know, the doe, rea, mea...

MB: How long did you go to school?

HC: How long I went to school? 8th grade.

CB: You went to public school until 8th grade?

HC: No, I was in public school until 6th grade and then we had our own school, like the Amish, Chen (?), Beechy, Conservative, and the Mennonites all went together in the Hartville area. Built a school, and that's where I went to school the last three years.

MB: Did you like it better in the public or...

HC: I think it's better for our people in the public.

MB: Really, why?

HC: The reason why, I think they're more ashamed of their things that they do, the Amish...when they're just the Amish together. We don't like to see them mix, no, but to go to school I think it's better for them. But the schools were drifting so far with things we didn't believe in having in school, which is the reason we went to our own school.

MB: Like what?

HC: Well, they had, they were teaching things we just didn't believe in like saluting the flag and stuff like that. And um, so many games... we like to have games with our children, but in reason

you know. See my dad he didn't like it too good when we were in public school, we played a lot of marble. I was in a tournament. And my sister was in the top of the girls and I was in the top of the boys. Then they wanted us to go to Canton and Cleavland and different areas. Then we of course quit-let someone else take over. (Laughs)

CB: So did your children go to public school, or did they go to Amish school?

HC: We got Amish school here, yes. It helps our children. They get, in the public schools they don't get them to learn German, to read German. In our schools, every Friday afternoon they get German.

MB: So what language do you...

HC: We have to teach English. But we have half a day that we can teach German.

MB: What do you speak at home?

HC: German. Pennsylvania Dutch. It isn't high German. If you'd hear us talk, there's a lot of English words come out; they're a lot a like. Now if you go to Pennsylvania People, horse and buggy Mennonites, there German is more German than ours is.

CB: So, when your children are little, do you speak to them in English at all?

HC: They learn some English at home; we try, so it isn't so hard for them when they get to school. Usually it's the hardest for the oldest because you don't talk enough English at home until she goes to school.

MB: What was it like for you going to public schools where they spoke, I'm assuming, all English?

HC: Our English, where I went to school, is different English than what it was in like Holmes county. Pronouncing different words different ways. Their slang was more a "th" than an "s" sound, where we were taught to use that as a "th" sound. So instead of saying dis and dat, you know....(laughter). Now my mom, she only went through the third grade when she went to school. She was needed at home at that time, because that was back eighty years ago. My dad was the first Amish boy born in Stark County. That settlement was started in 1905.

CB: And where did they come from before moving there?

HC: Holmes County. He come Jogged (?) County, then he come down to Stark and that's where he was born. My grandaddy was the first Amish minister in Stark County.

CB: So do you think that now Amish people are moving a lot because of these differences about what order they belong to and stuff like that?

HC: Oh yeah. If the people would have just stayed home in Wayne's county and never set out for anything, how full would that be? (Laughs). Land is so expensive. Young people can't buy land and figure to farm there. It's getting the same way yours is. You can pay \$2000 dollars an acre for land here! Young person, our people can't buy that land and figure on making a living and paying for it. It's just impossible. Then we get people who go out to Pennsylvania and go out in the mountains where the land is a little rougher, bought land for a lot less. You know, started farming....

MB: What do you do for a living here?

HC: Saw mill. We just started that this spring. I was doing carpentry work before, for about fifteen years.

MB: So is your whole family working on that? And you mentioned your daughter getting married. Is he working there as well.

HC: Yes. He's from Wisconsin. He just come in Thursday. Sunday, my daughter was supposed to get married. Now they're getting married the 17th of November.

MB: How did they meet?

HC: In February, my daughter was up in church in Jonesville (?), and he was in from Wisconsin with another boy who one of the girls in Jonesville had met. They met there for the first time. He's twenty six years old on the same day she's twenty three. Her birthday is today.

CB: So does that happen a lot where young people will marry people from far away?

HC: That's how I met my wife. You probably know David Millers? He just died down in your area?

MB and CB: Yeah, oh yeah.

HC: Well at his wedding, his wife is my wife's first cousin. They got married in Hardway, and my wife come up from Holmes County and I met her there at the wedding. Three years later we got married.

MB: So has he been coming up a lot, or has he been living here?

HC: No, probably about every six weeks he'll show up, or else she'll go out to visit him.

MB: When did they decide to get married?

HC: Oh, about two months ago.

MB: Is he going to live here?

HC: Oh yes.

CB: So can you tell us how many children you have?

HC: Nine. Forty eight grandchildren. One great grandchild.

MB: How many live in this block of houses?

HC: My daughter, son-in-law and eight children in the other house. My daughter and seven children in this house besides me and my wife.

CB: Wow, that's a lot of kids!

HC: I'm looking for them all the 17th of November. We have the wedding here. All tables in here (indicating to the room).

MB: What kind of holidays do you celebrate?

HC: That we celebrate? Ascension day. That's the day we feel Jesus went to Heaven; four days after Easter. Then we got Good Friday, and Old Christmas, the 6th day of January. We don't work it the 25th of December...then we'd have two Christmases.

MB: Does the whole family come back for these holidays? What do you do to celebrate them?

HC: No, not always. They try to around Christmas and New Years, but not always.

CB: If family members were coming from far away, like Wisconsin, how would they get here?

HC: Greyhound Bus, or train. The bus would come to Mansfield and the train would go to Sandusky and a driver would bring them down.

MB: No flying?

HC: No flying.

CB: And do you ride in cars a lot?

HC: Not a lot, but occasionally. That's where a lot of people get disputes, you know. Some people use it more than they need to. They do a little more here than they do in the Ashland area. Like if we are going to work here, they allow for whoever we're working for, if they furnish "transpertertion", they can pick us up to their place and we can work there. In the Ashland area, you take the horse and buggy and go as far as you can.

MC: So they don't....

HC: They still hire someone to go to town every once and a while, for business, you know.

You're really not supposed to, unless it's really necessary; like you need to go to the doctors or something like that.

MB: But they would be okay about taking the Greyhound bus to...

HC: Anyplace. About six years ago, we went all the way to San Diego. Eleven of us had, each ticket was \$105 a piece, round-trip, for fourteen days. So we went to San Diego. We had friends picking us up right at the bus station. We was there one night, got a hotel there.

MB: What did you do there?

HC: Just visited. Went over to Mexico, visited the beach, see how the beach was. Went up the mountain, watched the sun go down. Then we went from there to the Grand Canyon. Then we were in Phoenix, Arizona for a week.

CB: So would maybe the more conservative Amish not go on a trip like that?

HC: Most people go to places like that if they're Amish, as long as they take a bus or train. Now like the New Order, and there is another order they call Old Order who are not as strict as we are, they sometimes hire a van, and just take a trip from place to place.

CB: We're kind of curious as to what kind of things kids do in your community. Like what kind of work do they do, and stuff like that.

HC: Just regular farming, and helping at the mills. There's some that do carpenter work, and uh, not in factories. We stay self-employed, because we are exempt from social security, so we have to stay self-employed. The girls are hired out a lot to help neighbors, or to help someone having a baby or stuff like that. We got two granddaughter right now who are teaching school. The one who's getting married, she's teaching school.

MB: So the work you do is mostly serving your community?

HC: Yeah.

MB: Because we have an Amish group who comes to Kenyon and will sell crafts or food. Is that common?

HC: It is common for some. Not in this area. I think over in Columbus and those places. There's people who make crafts in this area, but not too many. In Ashland there's quite a few of them.

CB: So there aren't too many people in your community here who make things or do service type of jobs where they would go out in the greater area.

HC: No.

MB: What's your contact with English outside the Amish community.

HC: Neighbors. They're just people. We've got some nice neighbors. We don't get involved too much with outsiders. Like in our business here (indicates outside to the mill), an outsider furnishes all the lumber. We just process it, and he picks it all back up again. He does that in about four different mills in this area here. He gets lumber out of Canada and brings it here to process it. Cuts it up in lengths, slats, ready for (?)

CB: Do you ever socialize much with people who aren't Amish?

HC: No.

CB: Is that because you are separate, or because of beliefs...

HC: It's our belief not to associate too much with the English people.

CB: Can you explain to us a little more...

HC: Well, what we're afraid of, we have problems that the young people would like to leave and go to the English. And it has happened different times already, and then they'd like to come back, and the girl wants to go with an Amish and it just doesn't work. We got one family in this area that's married to an English girl; they live like the Amish. She just seed that he just wasn't feeling good. That he had no ambition for work or nothing unless he was home with the Amish. So she come with him, joined to Amish church, started speaking Pennsylvania Dutch. They got a child now. But so often, I've got a couple nephews that way; that went out, got acquainted to an English girl, got married, and want to come back. But there's no way she would want to do that. (End of side one)

....and he crippled his hand, and the Amish sent him quickly to the doctor. Now he's trying to sue the Amish for the accident.

CB: Do Amish people get involved in law very much. Would an Amish person sue someone like that?

HC: Once in a while it'll happen, yeah. We had one case in Holmes County where an Amish bishop excommunicated a couple that left the Amish, but they had to vote with the old church (?). Later, he sued the Amish bishop, for excommunicating him. And, they had a law suit going, and it went through. It cost I don't know how many hundred thousand dollars. They just sold him out, the Amish bishop, for everything he had. Course the Amish just bought a factory now that he had the money. The day after the law suit, a New York lawyer, come down to Wooster to visit the lawyer in this suit. He says, " You know the law is that there is not supposed to be a law suit with a church; that's against the law." He could have took his licence away. And it wasn't but a year later that the guy who sued the Amish bishop killed himself. What did the money do him good?

CB: On a similar topic, we talked about someone marrying someone who was not Amish, or

people going from being Catholic to Amish. So I'm wondering how often people get divorced? Is that common?

HC: How often that happens you mean? I don't know. It's a little rare that they come back. It happens once every five years, but most boys...

MB: We've got an audience here (Henry's two grandson's and future son-in-law have sat down at the table and are listening to the interview)

CB: One of the things that we've always heard about Amish people is that young people get a certain amount of time where they're free to leave the community and go out into the world and see what it's like to live as other Americans do, and we're just wondering if this happens or not?

HC: It's a time that they're allowed to, but whether it's a time they do ... oh, we I believe we let the children go on a trip someplace, to see what the world's like. I don't think it's good if they just at home, just that's it don't see what anything out in the world is, ya know.

MB: Did you do that? What did you do?

HC: Oh yeah, just traveled to other communities. Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Pennsylvania, you name it, go visit them in the other communities. Then we go to the east coast or the west coast to see what it's like. I haven't seen it all yet, not yet.

MB: So you visited other Amish communities?

HC: Usually we go where there are other communities.

MB: Do a lot of time people decide to go and live in those other communities?

HC: Oh yeah, that happens quite often. There is I would have know how many Amish communities start in a year's time. It was in the Church budget? at one time. Is it an average of 20 communities in a year? There's about 20 different communities that start in the United States every year.

MB: How?

HC: Just people go out and start and make there own rules and regulations about the way they think it should be, ya know. And try to buy cheaper land. A community when it gets big the more heads the more problems. That's the danger. The more heads the more problems.

MB: So there's really like millions of different types of Amish? Variations?

HC: Well no, not that many. There's hundreds of them.

CB: Do you have a guess as to how many Amish communities there are in the United States, or

maybe just in Ohio?

HC: I did know. There's a record of it. There's a book out of all the Amish settlements that have ever been and how many failed and why they failed. I haven't read it myself. Harvill (?) When it started there's a book out about it and who started it and what happened ever since up until ten years ago. But there's only 6 families left. When I left there it we had married 45 years the 15th of November when we got married there were three big Amish churches and 100 families in the Harvill? area at that time.

CB: Wow.

HC: But, I'd say a third of them people just drifted to other churches but stayed in that same area. But 2/3 of them people moved out into different areas.

CB: How many people do you think leave altogether and become Catholic or some other religion and don't come back to the Amish community?

HC: You mean that would leave and come back you mean?

CB: I mean leave all together and never come back?

HC: Oh, I wouldn't have a total, but I'd say at least a fourth of the Amish. At least a fourth of the Amish people leave. Now, that's all Amish. In this community that maybe not what happens. In Holmes, Wayne County. That's the biggest Amish settlement in the world. Pennsylvania's next, Lancaster'd be the next. Then Indiana'd be the next.

CB: Have any of your children left the Amish community?

HC: Not a one.

CB: Have they switched orders?

HC: No, they all worship with us.

MB: Is that something that the community is worried about in general?

HC: A lot of people worry about that. That's one rough thing about our people. A lot of our families have their children in different denominations other than Amish. It's just a mix affair. Like my brothers and sisters, one's a Catholic and I got about 4 of them with the New Order and about 3 of them with the Beachy Amish that's just like I got a brother and sister in Birmy(?), Indiana. They are stricter than we are material-wise, uh in other words they don't have the motors pulled by horse. But they are allowed to hire somebody to come in there and do work like plowing, combine, bailing hay, like we weren't allowed to do. And they go out and work and people pick them up for work and they use any modern saws or anything with carpentry work. When we, what we have is what we use.

MB: Could you describe what your order believes in using as far as technology?

HC: That's a rough one. (Laughs) Well, like material-wise, we believe in farming with horses only. And uh, no modern motorized machines. If there is a motor used it'll be stationary. Like if you bail hay you bring all the hay to the bailer and that's it. We cut all of our wheat and oats and bring it in and put it through a thrashing machine. We wouldn't hire nobody with a combine to come in and do it. That's most material-wise. Now, there's Amish settlements that farm with strictly horses, using anything that as long as it's ground-driven. No Motors. But, then you got New Order Amish that use anything in the field with a motor on it that's pulled by horses instead of a tractor.

MB: What about other areas, like clothing?

HC: Oh yeah, that's a big difference from one area to another.

CB: What are the differences? What regulations do you all follow about what cloths you wear and stuff?

HC: Well, the costume what we think our forefathers wore, as near as we can. Our hats, height and our brims a certain width, and your hair has to be a certain length. Give or take. They're (referring to grandsons) a little long right now. We don't believe in hippy type hair, and we don't believe in having haircuts where your ears are all stickin' out.

MB & CB: What about colors? Colors?

HC: Colors, dark colors. Women, no light colors whatsoever. The men white shirts, yeah, for Sunday to go to Church and even during the week once and a while. Other than that, dark.

CB: And what about how your cloths are made?

HC: Oh, handmade, no bought cloths. Underwears, yes, that's bought.

MB: Socks?

HC: Socks, yes, they buy that. That's one thing I couldn't understand, my dad was so strict when I was a boy, when the girls would come up to ride around with the young folks, 16, 17 years old, my dad would in the morning watch the wash line to see if there were any bought cloths there. Now, these last years he wouldn't of cared. It's just a difference.

CB: What about buttons?

HC: Our people use buttons. In Burmy where my brother is, no buttons on their shirts.

MB: Why?

HC: It's just the way they were grown up, they were started that way. They're Swiss people.

They're not Pennsylvania Dutch. It's Swiss. We can't even understand it.

MB: So, there's no definite reason behind it?

HC: There's no reason, really. It's just that. It's kinda funny. IT's like we're allowed to have three buttons, no more. My dad had buttons all the way down through. IT's just a difference. I had a brother who lives on the other side of Kentucky. Beachy Amish. But they wore the same cloths as we did, but they were the Beachy Amish. IT's confusing for your people, I know it is. A lot of this is really confusing. You can't hardly read the Amish anymore. Do they really stand up for what they believe is the question always.

MB: I'm curious about dating?

HC: Yeah, singing. See, every Sunday night there's a sing. And all the young folks come together and have singing for an hour, hour and a half. And then they go out for a date if they want to.

MB: What do they do to go out for a date?

HC: Just take her home and sit down and visit with her. But soon after midnight they're supposed to go home.

MB: And at what age does this happen?

HC: You have to be 17 in this area before you have your date.

CB: So, when you're 17 you can go to the singing and you get to go on a date afterwards.

HC: Uh-huh.

CB: But that would only be on Sunday. Could you do it on other days of the week?

HC: No.

CB: When do people get married? How old are they?

HC: Well, it varies, it depends, 18 to 26. (Laughing at his soon-to-be son-in-law who is 26) It just depends on people. They join the Church usually around 17. The reason our people don't join the church earlier is that we believe that they should wait until they are ready to join the church so they know why they are joining. Like Catholics they baptize their babies. They don't even know why. But that's their belief. That's up to them. They change a lot too. Everything used to be Latin. It's English now.

CB: So what does involve? How does joining the church work?

HC: Usually 6 months before they have a consulate with the minister, and then every Sunday

before that there's Church for about 6 months. And then they get baptized and are a member of the church. There are serious questions that they ask you before they get baptized.

CB: What are those?

HC: Like, do you think that this is the right belief that they wanted. And they'll say yes. And there's a scripture that we use, in English I couldn't tell ya, but in German I could tell you in a hurry what it is. In the bible you can read about it.

MB: Did you grow up speaking English?

HC: Yeah, in school we spoke English.

MB: So when did you learn English?

HC: When you start school. (His grandsons add, When we started school.)

MB: (Turns to grandsons) So, how old are you?

#1: I'm 13 years old.

#2: 12.

MB: I'm assuming that you're brothers? You look a lot alike.

HC: Yeah, he's in 8th grade, and he's 7th grade.

CB: Well, this might be a good time to ask some about school.

MB: Yeah, do you guys want to talk some? (To boys) Is it OK if we ask them some questions?
(To Henry)

HC: Sure, if you can get them to talk.

CB: So, when did you guys start going to school?

#1 & #2: When we were six.

CB: How long will you go to school for?

Boys: 14 years.

HC: And that's long. Through the 8th grade and until 14.

MB: What's a typical day at school like?

#1: Oh, a day. We have about an hour and a half of school and we work on our lessons, and we have 15 minutes to go out for recess. And then we go in again and then we have about an hour and a half and then at noon we have about an hour, and then we go on until 3 o'clock and then we go home.

CB: What are you studying at school?

#1: Mathematics, English, Geography.

CB: How about you (other boy), what are you studying?

#2: The same.

HC: The same.

CB: Where's your school?

#1: About a mile and a half mile down the road.

MB: But there's one just up the road here?

HC: About a half a mile. That's the one where my granddaughter teachers school there. She's just a helper, she helps the teacher there. All 8 grades in one room.

MB: So, why, do they go to the school that's a mile and a half away when there's one closer?

HC: Too full. We try to kinda balance it. We try not to have 30 people in one school if we can help it, but it happens. WE try to stay right around 20, 25, sometimes not even that much. There's about 10, 11 schools, something like that. So that takes a lot of teachers.

MB: Yeah So, (to boys) what do you guys do for fun?

#1: Play ball.

HC: Get into mischief once and a while.

CB: Are there any things in particular that you like to do around the farm? Any animals in particular? ...

#1: Drive horses.

MB: What are you going to do when you get out of school?

#1: Oh, usually work in the shop or something like that.

CB: Do you have a favorite animal?

#1: Horse.

HC: What about the dogs?

#2: The dogs are nice too.

MB: What are your chores like? What do you have to do?

HC: Not to many chores.

#1: Feed the horses, water them.

CB: Do you have a lot of homework that you have to do?

#1: Not much.

HC: Usually they come out in the shop after school, unless they have lessons, and then they do those first. ... They had the whooping cough and they had to stay home from school for a while. And they brought their lessons home. The other children stayed away, but they brought their lessons home.

MB: Do you have tests?

#1: Yes, every six weeks.

MB: And, so can you fail grades?

HC: Oh yes. IF you get to many F's, yes.

#1: If you don't pass, you have to go back to the same grade.

CB: What about High School? Does anybody ever go to more school? Like I've heard before that someone might go to school and get trained as a doctor or something else that the community needs. Does that ever happen?

HC: Nope, it happened all right, but they left the Amish to do it.

CB: But would they come back afterwards?

HC: They would leave forever. We got some of our own people who do some doctoring, but as much as an Amish does. They won't charge. They won't take in the public. People who get like broken bones, we got somebody who puts casts on. You got tore up or something, I got 20

stitches in my head from had an accident. 6th day of November it'll be 2 years. Car hit me from behind when I was going to work. I went flying and hit my head. Had to kill the horse. It was banged up too bad. It's no wonder we didn't get killed. He was just cruising at 55 mph and had his cruise control on. IT was dark, like 6:00 in the morning, and uh he was just driving and just swerved and hit the corner and we went flying, the two of us.

MB: Does that happen often?

HC: Quite often. Not very often, but still it happens. See, there were six people killed right out here on June 14th, in '88. A drunk come up from behind right into the buggy and killed six people.

MB: At what age can children drive buggies?

HC: That varies. Five, six years old.

MB: Wow. (To the boys) Do you guys drive buggies?

HC: Oh yeah, they do. But they got a sister older than 'em who never drove a horse yet. But she will.

CB: Is that because she's afraid of it? ...

HC: Yes, she's more or less afraid of it. She'll drive with ya, but she won't take the lines and drive.

CB: Do girls do different things than boys?

HC: Oh yeah, usually among the Amish if there are chores the girls will do, ... well, like milking, the girls will do a lot of milking.

CB: What other things are there that boys do that girls don't do?

HC: Haul manure. Pitch manure, take out the trash. Now, there are some girls who do that too.

MB: So, is it their choice?

HC: Oh yeah. There are some girls that like to get out in the field and plow with horses. I think all of our girls did, just about all of them. They enjoyed it. Not to often girls get involved in loading hay to bring in like the boys do.

CB: Are there different rules for girls and boys? Like what they are allowed to do or places they are allowed to go?

HC: Our people do not like girls or boys to go and work for the English people, like housework,

just we'll go help a neighbor, for a day or so or something like that, but you know.

MB: So boys aren't allowed to do that?

HC: Well, unless they get a certain age and go and help their dad with carpenter work or something like that.

MB: But are there any other specific rules for

HC: Well, not really. Our teachers do not get as much money as regular teachers get to teach school. Girls get, what, about \$15 per day to teach school, but the men, if they teach school, they get uh, \$50 a day. That's too much difference as far as I'm concerned.

CB: Why is that?

HC: Well, they figure women just don't need it. It's spending money.

MB: What do they spend it on?

HC: Well, the reason is that it's that much so that you can get a man to teach school if it's a school that needs a man there. 'Cause he can go out and do carpentry work and get more than that, but they're just glad if they can \$50, well OK we'll give them a schoolhouse to teach school. Ya know they're our children and if they need a whipping, they get a whipping. And they don't get sued for it neither. Often we got home tutoring?

CB: So, are there many men who teach school?

HC: Two of them. There's 2 or 3 in this area. The rest are just girls teaching.

CB: And are they mostly young women who teach until they get married? And when they get married do they still teach?

HC: As a rule, no. Some old maids, close to 30 years, they still teach school.

MB: (TO the boys) DO you guys go to school 5 days per week?

#1: Yes, we have Saturdays and Sundays off.

CB: Do you do any special things on the weekend?

HC: Nothing special, really. Once and a while they want to go fishing.

MB: Are there within the order, do you guys have big dances or

HC: NO big doings of any kind. The young folks they get together once and a while and play volleyball or something like that, ya know. In school they got a ball and at recess. The last day

of school they, anybody that's got children there, or our grandchildren, are allowed to come to the picnic and they get to play ball after dinner. And that's the last day of school, and that's when the men get stiff.

CB: Sounds like fun.

MB: Do you know most of the people in this community? Is it 10 miles across

HC: Most of the people. And if I don't know them, they probably know me.

MB: And how do you know them?

HC: Well, at church is where I meet them. Churches go to visit. And our granddaughters, they work for a lot of people around, and we get acquainted with them. And if we have a barn raising, everybody in the community is invited to come to the barn raising and then you meet a lot of them.

MB: Can you explain barn raisings?

<End of 1st tape>

HC: I get a little older and don't have to go out there. I got a son-in-law up in Ashland that does copper work for a hundred years (?) already, and he ask me, 'you mean you're going to work for a living now?'

CB: Can you describe for us what your religion entails? What's it called?

HC: It's just that we're Amish. That's the name for it. It comes from Jacob Amond. That's where the Amish name comes from. The Mennonites, their name comes from Menno Simmons (?).

CB: Can you give a explanation of your religious practices? Like what do you do as part of your religion?

HC: Well, we get born again, and things like that is what we teach in church. Change in life, away from your single life into born again. That's when people join the church. That's the reason.

CB: The reason that people join the church is to be born again?..... And is that what happens when they join the church when they are 17 or 18 years old?

HC: Yes, 16, once and a while you get someone who waits until they're 20, 21. Our church starts, oh, close to 9:00, and lasts till 12, a little after, when we eat a small meal. And then we sit afterwards and visit. Sometimes we go home with somebody else and visit.

MB: And the children go as well?

HC: Yes, the whole family.

CB: How frequently do you have church here at your house.

HC: Usually it's once a year. Maybe doesn't take quite a year, sometimes 10 months. Depending on how many people are in a district. Usually it's around once a year.

CB: And is there someone who's a preacher or a priest?

HC: Yep, we got a bishop, two ministers and a deacon. And that's what we have in every district.

CB: So, in the service, would the bishop?....

HC: Well, they take turns, every week they take turns for the one that'll have the opening. And first church starts with singing. The minister... hour hour and a half, when they come back the minister does the sermon. Then we got another one that reads the scripture, what we got for that day. Usually we got two. He'll read the first one, that's like the main sermon which lasts maybe an hour until maybe 11:30, and then he'll read the other scripture and explain it. Then he'll sit back and he'll have a vote, and ask anybody of the ministers and old brothers and strangers if their sermon does correspond with the new testament or not. And then he stands up and thanks everybody for attending the sermon and then there's another prayer and then it's over.

MB: So, this is usually done at people's houses? But there is a central church in each area?

HC: There's 7 churches in this area. So three have church one Sunday and four the next Sunday. The reason that we don't have every each Sunday is so that we can go visit.

CB: IS there a church building?

HC: No, there's no church building, it's the area, it's just the houses.

MB: So the reason that there are 7 churches is so that you can go and visit the others?

HC: See, we don't let our churches get big so the house can't hold 'em. And you take areas where churches get too big and you got people who don't want to come 'cause they got to sit way back in the corner and can't hear like they supposed to. That happens. Not all ministers stand up. Some stand up and you can hear them better. They boys don't get scared all the time, but once and a while they got one that's (really scary).

CB: Is it the same order of Amish that worships together? Is your church all Old Order Amish?

HC: All Old Order Amish. Now, there's areas where you got Amish and others that come in there once and a while that come in for a Sunday. Take for instance at home, the Harvell area,

the reason there's only 6 Amish families there anymore. And there's 6 K (?) Church people, all that's left of that. And they got a big church house and only 6 families left. Now once and a while they come to the Amish church and just visit. Now there's not much difference, but there is. Only difference that was there when I was at home was that they got pockets on their shirts, they have smaller rimmed hats, they got rubber tire buggies and they farm with a tractor. Other than that their whiskers and hair just about the same.

CB: What kind of impressions do non-Amish have of you? What do they think?

HC: Well, if they don't like their Amish community here, they'll leave. Go to another Amish community where they think they'll like it better. You got people coming into this area that didn't last a couple of months. They get homesick for where they were.

MB: Are you talking about people coming to live within the Amish community?

HC: That are Amish in the other districts that we worship with that moved into the area and thought they'd like it here. And we are stricter with our young folks about rules and regulations. How long their singin' is, how late when they have a date and uh, like not using any tobacco like some areas they do. People move into this area and they couldn't take it here because they didn't have their tobacco. They went back to where they was from where they chew or smoke or drink. You can't drink here. I won't say that it hasn't happened. 'Cause young folks, once and a while, they get involved in something that they shouldn't. We don't like it, we punish them once and a while.

MB: What are the consequences for something like that?

HC: Punishment for something like that? We won't let 'em go to the sing for a couple of weekends. They'll stay home. At that age we don't whip 'em, we just explain why. We don't believe, ... when there's a singing, we want them to sing as if Jesus was right there. Not come in there and talk and this and that. That happens once and a while. One or two can ruin it for all the rest of them.

CB: Do outsiders ever have a bad impression of Amish?

HC: Oh yeah, we have English people like that once and a while. When a community first starts someplace, a lot of English people feel that way. They don't want to have anything to do with us. But, later years, when we've proved what we are,... but you still have English people in the are who just don't know, who won't sell a piece of land to us or something like that.

MB: Have you ever experienced personally discrimination like that?

HC: No, not me personally. I usually as a rule I feel that you should talk to English people. If people are going to ask questions, then you have to answer them. We get too many people who just don't want to talk, they're afraid to get involved with something that they don't want to be involved with. I think that we shouldn't be ashamed to tell what we are, why we are Amish.

You shouldn't be ashamed of that. Now, there are things that happen that we don't like outsiders to find out about, we like to keep it to our own, really if something happens or if someone gets into a sin of some kind, we try to keep it just in our church. And they usually get excommunicated and so on. We try to keep it just in our church, and they get excommunicated for maybe 4, 6 weeks and then make a confession and back to church and we're supposed to forget what their sins are, for good. Then just start all over.

CB: Would they have to be born again?

HC: Yeah, they wouldn't be re-baptized, but the minister would council and go with them and then explain 'em why we're doing this and that and get them back on track.

CB: Are there things that you would like the English to know about your community? To clear up false beliefs, or

HC: Not really, there's nothing that I ... Usually, your English neighbors usually know how the Amish feel after several years around and they new that there's always black sheep in every flock, but we can make mistakes just like anybody else can. We're not better than anybody else is. We got too many Amish communities around the United States, they just thing that they're better than anybody else. That's wrong.

CB: Why do you stay Amish then, if you don't think it's better?

HC: Well, I think if an English person gets born again and accepts Christ, they can go to heaven just as well as an Amish men can. IT's the same things. And I think it's a sin for an Amish men, cause he was brought up different than an English person, it could be a thing that English do that would be a sin for an Amish to do. But still I don't think it's wrong for the English person to do that. We're supposed to live and let live. Why fight?

CB: Just one more question about marriage I'm curious how much choice young people have about who they marry?

HC: IT's up to themselves. Now, if they happen to go with a boy from some area, we try to find out what the boy's like. Now the older folks just kinda watch and try to get acquainted with the other people. Once they get married the boy is supposed to use the girl's family just like as if it were his own, and the girl the boy's family just like her own.

MB: Is it usual that the man will move in with the woman's family?

HC: Not always. Depends on which one gives up for the marriage. I don't know whether they even made a decision yet. Like here, they're getting married. He just asked if he can get a job here and a place to live. And my son-in-law said yeah, we'll give him a job in the mill, and we have a neighbor here who has an empty house, 'cause the man who lived in there just died last year, and it was empty and I went right away to see about renting it. If I wouldn't of, somebody else would've gotten it. It's been empty for a couple months. Usually we do not publish

ahead a marriage more than a couple of weeks.

MB: And you're granddaughter won't live with her husband until their ...

HC: Married.

CB: Why do you only publish a couple of weeks before the wedding?

HC: That's just our custom. We always have. I often wonder to what's around the bush. IF they're going to get married, they're going to get married. IT's a surprise, probably.

MB: Last names ... how many different last names? There's a myth that there's only 4 or 5 in the area ...

HC: Nope, that's not true. There's quite a few different Amish last names. I'm the only Coblentz in the area. C-o-b-l-e-n-t-z. Now if you go to Germany, it's spelled differently. There's the Troyer's, Miller's, Botter's (?), Hershberger's, Garbers, Gingritsch's....

CB: So, is there anything else? Any other misconceptions that people should know about or that you'd like to tell us?

HC: No, that's our first names we kind of watch. As a rule, it's not a double name. Just one single name like not a middle name, just an initial. You're dad's initial. Even after you're married. Like my wife, her initial is A because her father was Alvin. It's Martha A. Coblentz instead of Martha A. Yoder anymore.

CB: Is there anyone else who you think we should talk to?

HC: Who's got a big mouth. My wife would not be that. Maybe my daughter in the next house, she likes to talk. Bena. And, you ought to talk to an Amish bishop Crist Kassman. He lives in 31497 Tausser Road, make a right, it's the second house on the right, he's got a harness shop there.

MB: Would he talk to us?

HC: Yeah.

CB: Is he your bishop?

HC: He's one of our bishops in the area. If they would have somebody to speak for the area it would be him anyway. He's one of them guys who gets up (all with us?), but he's the next thing to it.

CB: yeah.

HC: HE could explain to you a lot of things. He gets acquainted with English people, but, I

mean, he's got a harness shop and he sells shoes and different things there. And if we got anything going with the law about anything, he gets involved with that, if there is anything. We try to stay out of it if we can, once and a while you have to, thing's will come up. Like years ago ya know, you had one Amish men in Holmes County that said he was going to build us schools, they did in Columbus they came up and had a meeting for the Amish, and they were not going to allow them to have outdoor bathrooms, you know, toilets anymore outdoors, it's gotta be in the school house. So Henry Hershberger he went down there and he told everybody else to keep quiet, that they were gonna try to pin us, but I'm ready. And that they said there all condemned schools with outdoor toilets, they are condemned. And then he says, you're sure now, these are going to be condemned. Is that for anything else too? Yes, ok. All the rules have parts, what are they? It stopped right there. They was condemning their own things. Didn't realize what they were doing.

CB: um.

HC: Well, we like to cooperate with the English as much as possible. The laws and stuff like that.

MB: I guess that's it.

CB: Yeah, well if we have some more questions for you after we listen to this, could we maybe come back and ask you a couple more questions sometime?

HC: Oh yeah. That's fine.

MB: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't catch your names (to grandsons).

#1: My name is Henry.

#2: Danny.

MB: I'm Molly, this is Claire.

CB: It's nice to meet you.

CB: Well, thank you so much for spending this time with us. It has been tremendously helpful-- we've learned so much about the Amish that we knew nothing about until today.

MB: Yeah, thank you.